



Obama, Pelosi and other Democrats make a fresh push for Biden to reconsider 2024 race

By LISA MASCARO, ZEKE MILLER, MICHAEL BALSAMO and AAMER MADHANI

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Democrats at the highest levels are making a critical push for President Joe Biden to reevaluate his election bid, with former President Barack Obama expressing private concerns to allies and Speaker Emerita Nancy Pelosi privately telling Biden the party could lose the ability to seize control of the House if he doesn't step away from the 2024 race.

Pelosi also presented polling to Biden that she argued shows he likely can't defeat Republican Donald Trump — though the former speaker countered Thursday in a sharp statement that the "feeding frenzy" from anonymous sources "misrepresents any conversations" she may have had with the president.

With time racing toward the party convention next month, Democratic unease is growing at the White House and within the campaign at a fraught moment for the president and his party.



Rep. Adam Schiff, D-Calif., during a hearing at the Capitol in Washington, on June 21, 2022.

Associated Press

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Obama, Pelosi and other Democrats make a fresh push for Biden to reconsider 2024 race

Continued from Front

Obama has conveyed to allies that Biden needs to consider the viability of his campaign but has also made clear that the decision is one Biden needs to make. The former president has taken calls in recent days from members of congressional leadership, Democratic governors and key donors to discuss their concerns about his former vice president. Biden has insisted he's not backing down, adamant that he's the candidate who beat Trump before and will do so again. Pressed about reports that Biden might be softening to the idea of leaving the race, his deputy campaign manager Quentin Fulks said Thursday: "He is not wavering



Former President Barack Obama speaks in Athens, Greece, June 21, 2023.

Associated Press

on anything." If anything, in recent days the president has become more committed to staying in the race, according to one person familiar with the internal discussions.

This story is based in part on reporting from more than half a dozen people who insisted on anonymity to discuss sensitive private deliberations. The Washington Post first reported on Obama's involvement.

Influential Democrats atop the party apparatus, including congressional leadership headed by Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer and House Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries, are sending signals of concern. Some Democrats hope Biden, off the campaign trail after testing positive for COVID-19, will take a fresh look at the trajectory of the race and his legacy over the coming days. Using mountains of data showing Biden's standing could seriously damage the ranks of Democrats in Congress, frank conversations in public and private and now the president's own few days of isolation, many Democrats see an opportunity to encourage a reassessment. He has been told the campaign is having trouble raising money. If Democrats are seriously preparing the extraordinary step of replacing Biden and shifting to Vice President Kamala Harris at the top of the ticket, this weekend will be critical to changing the president's mind, other people familiar with the private conversations said. One said it's now or never ahead of a planned virtual roll call to nominate the party's choice in early August, ahead of the Democratic National Convention in Chicago. Over the past week, Schumer and Jeffries, both of New York, have spoken privately to the president, candidly laying out the concerns of Democrats on Capitol Hill. Control of the House and Senate is at stake, and leaders are keenly aware that a Republican sweep in November could launch Trump's agenda for years to come. Separately, the chair of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, Rep. Suzan DelBene of Washington, spoke with the president last week armed with fresh data. The campaign chief specifically aired the concerns of front-line Democrats seeking election to the House. Major political donors, particularly in Pelosi's California, have been putting heavy pressure on the president's campaign and members of Congress, according to one

Democratic strategist. And on Wednesday, California Rep. Adam Schiff, a close ally of Pelosi, called for Biden to drop his reelection bid, saying he believes it's time to "pass the torch." Biden, in a radio interview taped just before he tested positive for COVID-19, dismissed the idea it was too late for him to recover politically, telling Univision's Luis Sandoval that many people don't focus on the November election until September. "All the talk about who's leading and where and how, is kind of, you know — everything so far between Trump and me has been basically even," he said in an excerpt of the interview released Thursday. Biden said Monday he hadn't spoken to Obama in a couple of weeks. While the attention to Biden has subsided somewhat, particularly after last weekend's Trump assassination attempt and as the Republican National Convention is underway in Milwaukee, Democrats know they have limited time to resolve the party turmoil after the president's faltering debate performance last month. To be sure, many want Biden to stay in the race. And the Democratic National Committee is pushing ahead with plans for a virtual vote to formally make Biden its nominee in the first week of August, ahead of the Democratic National Convention, which begins Aug. 19. Rep. James Clyburn, a senior Democrat who has been a key Biden ally, wrapped up several days of campaigning for Biden in Nevada and said: "Joe Biden has the knowledge. He's demonstrated that time and time again." He warned against those who he said "have an agenda." Late Wednesday, ABC News reported new details about Biden's private meeting over the weekend with Schumer at the president's beach home in Delaware. It said Schumer told the president it would be "better for the Democratic Party and better for the country if he were to bow out." A Schumer spokesperson called the report "idle speculation." □

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AQUARIUS

Rally shooter had photos of Trump, Biden and other U.S. officials on his phone, AP sources say

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER
and ERIC TUCKER
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The 20-year-old Pennsylvania man who tried to assassinate Donald Trump had photos on his phone of the former Republican president, President Joe Biden and other officials, including Attorney General Merrick Garland and FBI Director Chris Wray, according to two people familiar with the matter.

Investigators searching Thomas Matthew Crooks' devices have also found that the shooter looked up the dates for the Democratic National Convention as well as Trump's appearances, according to the people who spoke to The Associated Press on the condition on anonymity to discuss details of the ongoing probe.

The FBI has been searching for clues into what drove Crooks to open fire at Saturday's campaign rally in Butler, Pennsylvania, in an attempt to assassinate the GOP presidential nominee. The FBI has said they are investigating the shooting as a potential act of domestic



An electronic billboard displays images of former President Donald Trump from his recent rally at the Butler Farm Show, Thursday, July 18, 2024, in Butler, Pa.

Associated Press

terrorism but have yet to find a clear ideological motive. The FBI gained access to Crooks' cellphone, scoured his computer, home and car, and interviewed more than 100 people so far.

Crooks killed one rallygoer and seriously wounded two others. Trump suffered an ear injury but was not seriously hurt, appearing just days later at the Republican National Convention in Milwaukee with a bandage over the wound.

The shooter had also

searched for information about major depressive disorder, according to three people familiar the investigation. But investigators have not yet determined whether he was actually diagnosed with the disorder, one of the people said. Studies have shown that the vast majority of people with mental illnesses are not violent, and experts say most people who are violent do not have mental illnesses.

On a conference call with reporters Sunday, Kevin Rojek,

the special agent in charge of the Pittsburgh field office, said: "We have no indication of any mental health issues." Crooks used an AR-style rifle, which authorities said was purchased legally by his father. Investigators also found he brought multiple loaded magazines. He also bought 50 rounds on the day of the shooting. Authorities found a bulletproof vest in his car and another rudimentary explosive device at his home. Over the past few months he had received several packages

there, including some that had potentially hazardous material.

The shooting raised serious questions about why law enforcement was unable to stop the man from getting on a roof and opening fire. Multiple investigations into the security failures are underway, including a Department of Homeland Security inspector general's probe into the Secret Service's handling of security.

The Republican chairman of the House Oversight and Accountability Committee issued a subpoena Wednesday to Secret Service Director Kimberly Cheatle for her to appear before the committee on Monday. Republican have been calling for Cheatle to resign in the wake of the shooting, though she has said she has no intention do so.

Local law enforcement had noticed Crooks pacing around the edges of rally, shouldering a big backpack and peering into the lens of a rangefinder toward the rooftops behind the stage where the president later stood, officials have told the AP. □

Housing provider for unaccompanied migrant children engaged in sexual abuse and harassment, DOJ says

By PAUL WEBER and VAL-
ERIE GONZALEZ
Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — Employees of the largest housing provider for unaccompanied migrant children in the U.S. have repeatedly sexually abused and harassed children in their care over the past eight years, the Justice Department alleges.

Southwest Key employees, including supervisors, have raped, touched or solicited sex and nude images of children since at least 2015, the DOJ alleged in a lawsuit filed Wednesday. At least two employees have been charged since 2020, according to the lawsuit.

Based in Austin, Southwest Key is the largest provider of housing for unaccompanied migrant children, operating under grants from the

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. It has 29 child migrant shelters 17 in Texas, 10 in Arizona and two in California with room for 6,350 children. The company's largest shelter in Brownsville has a capacity of 1,200.

Health and Human Services reported 7,762 children at all of its contracted facilities on May 31, according to the most recent data on its website, which does not break the numbers down by shelter or provider. The department declined to say how many children were currently in Southwest Key's Care or if the agency continues to assign children to its care.

The lawsuit, which provided details of some of the alleged abuse, asserts that authorities received more than 100 reports of sexual

abuse or harassment at the provider's shelters since 2015.

Among the suit's allegations: An employee "repeatedly sexually abused" three girls ages 5, 8 and 11 at the Casa Franklin shelter in El Paso, Texas. The 8-year-old told investigators that the worker "repeatedly entered their bedrooms in the middle of the night to touch their 'private area,' and he threatened to kill their families if they disclosed the abuse."

The suit also alleges that an employee of the provider's shelter in Tucson, Arizona, took an 11-year-old boy to a hotel and paid him to perform sexual acts for several days in 2020.

Children were threatened with violence against themselves or family if they reported the abuse, accord-

ing to the lawsuit. It added that testimony from the victims revealed staff in some instances knew about the ongoing abuse and failed to report it or concealed it. Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra said Thursday that the com-

plaint "raises serious pattern or practice concerns" about Southwest Key. "HHS has a zero-tolerance policy for all forms of sexual abuse, sexual harassment, inappropriate sexual behavior, and discrimination," he said in a statement. □



Buildings that house juveniles and operations on the grounds of Southwest Key Campbell, a shelter for children that have been separated from their parents, is shown June 28, 2018, in Phoenix.
Associated Press

Federal appeals court dismisses lawsuit over Tennessee's anti-drag show ban

By **KIMBERLEE KRUESI**

Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — A federal appeals court on Thursday dismissed a lawsuit challenging first-in-the-nation law designed to place strict limits on drag shows, reversing a lower court ruling that deemed the statute unconstitutional and blocked its enforcement in part of the state.

The 6th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that the Memphis-based LGBTQ+ theater company that filed the complaint last year lacked the legal right to sue over the law.

Friends of George's had alleged that the law would negatively affect them because they produce "drag-centric performances, comedy sketches, and plays" with no age restrictions.

However, the federal appeals court found that Friends of George's was not at risk of violating the 2023 law because its performances were not "harmful to minors."

Tennessee's Republican-dominated Legislature advanced the anti-drag law last year with the support of Republican Gov. Bill Lee. Several GOP members pointed to drag performances in their hometowns



Pageant winners throw out beads during the Memphis PRIDE Festival & Parade, June 4, 2022, in Memphis, Tenn.

as reasons why it was necessary to restrict such performances from taking place in public or where children could view them.

Yet the actual word "drag" doesn't appear in the statute. Instead, lawmakers changed the state's definition of adult cabaret to mean "adult-oriented performances that are harmful to minors." Furthermore, "male or female impersonators" were classified as a form of adult cabaret, akin

to strippers or topless dancers.

The law banned adult cabaret performances on public property or anywhere minors might be present. Performers who break the law risk being charged with a misdemeanor or a felony for a repeat offense.

In Thursday's ruling, the justices stressed that term "harmful to minors" has a specific definition under Tennessee law which has three components that must be

met in order to prosecute. The ruling also pointed out that the Tennessee Supreme Court limited the definition of "harmful to a minor" to materials lacking "serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value for a reasonable 17-year-old minor."

"FOG has not alleged that its performances lack serious value for a 17-year-old. In fact, it insists the exact opposite. Its own witness, a member of FOG's board, conceded that its shows

'are definitely appropriate' for a 15-year-old and would 'absolutely' have artistic value for a 17-year-old," the ruling stated.

Friends of George's did not immediately respond to an email seeking comment on the ruling.

Questions over how Tennessee's anti-drag ban should be enforced have constantly been debated since the law's inception. Democrats, who hold only a sliver of power in Tennessee, were quick to argue that the law was too vague and could be used by a prosecutor to target the LGBTQ+ community.

While a federal judge last June sided with Friends of George's that the law was "substantially overbroad" and encouraged "discriminatory enforcement," the ruling only applied to Shelby County, where Memphis lies. Shortly after, a district attorney warned Pride organizers in eastern Tennessee that he planned on enforcing the anti-drag ban during their annual festival, prompting organizers in Blount County to sue. A federal judge eventually granted a temporary restraining order preventing law enforcement and the district attorney from the enforcing the state law. □

Associated Press

Missouri high court clears the way for a woman's release after 43 years in prison



This undated booking photo provided by the Missouri Department of Corrections shows Sandra Hemme.

Associated Press

By **HEATHER HOLLINGSWORTH**

Associated Press

CHILLICOTHE, Mo. (AP) — The Missouri Supreme Court cleared the way Thurs-

day for a Missouri woman whose murder conviction was overturned to be freed after 43 years in prison.

A circuit court judge ruled last month that Sandra Hemme's attorneys showed evidence of her "actual innocence," and an appeals court ruled she should be freed while her case is reviewed.

But Hemme's immediate freedom has been complicated by lengthy sentences she received for crimes she committed while behind bars a total of 12 years, which were piled on top of the life sentence she received for her murder conviction.

Republican Attorney Gen-

eral Andrew Bailey took his fight to keep her locked up to the state's highest court, but her attorneys argued that keeping her incarcerated any longer would be a "draconian outcome."

Her release appears imminent, however, now that the Missouri Supreme Court has refused to undo the lower court rulings allowing her to be released on her own recognizance and placed in the custody of her sister and brother-in-law in the Missouri town of Higginsville.

No details have been released on when Hemme will be freed. One of her attorneys, Sean O'Brien, filed a motion Thursday

asking that a judge "hold an emergency status conference at the earliest possible time" and order Hemme's release.

Hemme's lawyers, in an emailed statement to The Associated Press, said her family "is eager and ready to reunite with her, and the Department of Corrections should respect and promptly" release her.

Hemme, now 64, had been serving a life sentence at a prison northeast of Kansas City after she was twice convicted of murder in the death of library worker Patricia Jeschke.

She's been the longest-held wrongly incarcerated woman known in the U.S.,

according to her legal team at the Innocence Project. "This Court finds that the totality of the evidence supports a finding of actual innocence," Circuit Court Judge Ryan Horsman concluded after an extensive review. Horsman noted that Hemme was heavily sedated and in a "malleable mental state" when investigators repeatedly questioned her in a psychiatric hospital. Her attorneys described her ultimate confession as "often monosyllabic responses to leading questions." Other than this confession, no evidence linked her to the crime, her trial prosecutor said. □

Ursula von der Leyen reelected to a second 5-year term as European Commission president

By **MIKE CORDER** and **JEAN-FRANCOIS BADIAS**
Associated Press

STRASBOURG, France (AP) — Lawmakers at the European Parliament on Thursday re-elected Ursula von der Leyen to a second 5-year term as president of the European Union's executive commission, giving her a comfortable majority and heading off a possible leadership vacuum.

Von der Leyen raised both fists in victory as the Parliament President Roberta Metsola read out the result at the legislature. She called her reelection a victory for her backers, lawmakers she called "pro-European, pro-Ukraine (and) pro-rule of law."

The reelection ensures leadership continuity for the 27-nation bloc as it wrestles with crises ranging from the war in Ukraine to climate change, migration and housing shortages. Von der Leyen said she and her supporters are working "for a strong Europe," citing themes of prosperity, security and defense. "But the most important is the overarching topic of strengthening our democracy," she said. "Our democracy is un-



European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, right, reacts after the announcement of the vote at the European Parliament in Strasbourg, eastern France, Thursday, July 18, 2024.

Associated Press

der attack from inside and from outside, and therefore it is crucial that the democratic forces stand together to defend our democracy." The Greens/European Free Alliance group in the parliament voted for von der Leyen after receiving assurances from her on her commitment to Europe's climate initiatives, improving social policies including moves to provide affordable housing

and to not do deals with the far right.

"The majority against the far right must hold for the future. We must not let our guard down in the face of growing far-right forces that work to strip away our rights and destroy our democracy," said the group's president Bas Eickhout.

A clear majority of 401 lawmakers in the 720-seat legislature voted for the German

Christian Democrat after a speech in which she pledged to be a strong leader for Europe in a time of crisis and polarization.

The secret ballot came hot on the heels of strong gains by the far right in last month's election for the European Parliament.

Italy's far-right League party said in a statement that von der Leyen's victory "has betrayed the vote of millions of

voters who were asking for change and who now will suffer the wicked choices of the green extremists."

Von der Leyen earlier told lawmakers she would "never accept that demagogues and extremists destroy our European way of life. And I stand here today ready to lead the fight with all the democratic forces in this house."

In a speech that sought to shore up support across the political spectrum, von der Leyen pledged to strengthen the EU economy, its police and border agencies, tackle migration and pursue policies tackling climate change while also helping farmers who have staged protests against what they call stifling EU bureaucracy and environmental rules.

She also vowed to tackle housing shortages across Europe and said she would appoint a commissioner for the Mediterranean region due to the multiple challenges it faces.

She also took a swipe at Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and his recent visit to Russia shortly after his country took over the rotating six-month EU presidency. □

A woman becomes commander of the Canadian Armed Forces for the first time

By **ROB GILLIES**
Associated Press

TORONTO (AP) — A woman has become the top commander of Canada's military for the first time.

Gen. Jennie Carignan officially took over command of the Canadian Armed Forces in a ceremony at the Canadian War Museum in Ottawa on Thursday. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said that Carignan is the first woman to lead the military of any Group of 20 or Group of Seven country.

"That could create a model and a change in terms of what is possible for women," Carignan said. "It's a great step forward. It is a result of many, many years within the Canadian Forces."

Carignan was promoted to the rank of general during the change-of-command ceremony, after being chosen by Trudeau's government to become Canada's first female defense chief.

Trudeau called it a historic day and praised Carignan as someone of the right caliber to take over. He named her to the role earlier this month.

"You are the very first woman to ever become Chief of the Defense staff in Canada, the very first in the G7 and the G20. You are a role model for all Canadians and the world," Trudeau said during the ceremony. In 2018, Trudeau appointed the first female head of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and his Cabinet has

been 50% female since he took office in 2015.

Carignan is no stranger to firsts. She was also the first woman to command a combat unit in the Canadian military, and her career has included deployments to Iraq, Afghanistan, Bosnia and Syria.

For the last three years, she has been the chief of professional conduct and culture, a job created as a result of the sexual misconduct scandal in 2021.

Carignan called the promotion a natural step and said that she is grateful.

"I'm ready for this. I've worked all of this time," she said.

She said her top priorities include recruitment and retention.

The appointment comes

as Canada continues to face criticism from NATO allies for not spending 2% of its gross domestic product on defense. The Canadian

government recently said that it would reach its NATO commitment by 2032, but specifics have yet to be provided. □



Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau shakes hands with Gen. Jennie Carignan, incoming Chief of the Defence Staff, after her remarks at a change of command ceremony at the Canadian War Museum in Ottawa, on Thursday, July 18, 2024.

Associated Press

U.S. announces \$325 million in funding to boost Puerto Rico solar projects as outages persist

By **DÁNICA COTO**

Associated Press

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP)

— The U.S. government announced Thursday that \$325 million in federal funds will be available for solar and battery storage installations across Puerto Rico as the U.S. territory struggles with chronic power outages.

The program, funded by the U.S. Department of Energy, will target community centers and healthcare facilities, as well as common areas in subsidized, multi-family housing.

"Households aren't the only place you need power during and after an emergency," said U.S. Energy Secretary Jennifer Granholm during a visit to Puerto Rico. The announcement comes amid widespread anger over outages that repeatedly leave Puerto Ricans in the dark. The island of 3.2 million people has a more than 40% poverty rate and some cannot afford a generator.

Government officials say the outages also endan-



A brigade from the Electric Power Authority repairs distribution lines damaged by Hurricane Maria in the Cantera community of San Juan, Puerto Rico, Oct. 19, 2017.

Associated Press

ger the lives of those who depend on oxygen, refrigerated insulin and dialysis machines.

Granholm on Thursday visited the southern coastal town of Santa Isabel, one of several towns in the area hit by a power outage in June that left 10,000 cus-

tomers in the dark.

That same month, another widespread outage left some 350,000 customers without power across Puerto Rico, prompting Gov. Pedro Pierluisi to order an investigation.

"It is unacceptable," Granholm said of the situation.

The outage in Santa Isabel and nearby towns prompted Luma, a private company that operates the transmission and distribution of power, to install emergency generators.

Luma also launched a \$4-million effort to transport and install a new mega

transformer in the area, but the plan failed after crews discovered that an "internal problem" rendered the equipment unusable, further enraging customers and government officials. Luma recently said it would relocate another transformer based in the southeast coastal town of Maunabo, but the announcement angered the local mayor, who blocked access to the equipment, saying his town depended on it. Luma has said that transformer is not essential to providing electricity to Maunabo.

On Sunday, Luma warned that at least 11 transformers in electric substations across Puerto Rico are "vulnerable," and if they were to fail, tens of thousands of customers would be left without power.

Puerto Rico's power grid remains frail nearly seven years after Hurricane Maria pummeled the island as a powerful Category 4 storm, leaving some without electricity for up to a year. □

Haiti's prime minister orders gangs to drop weapons and promises to take back control of the capital

By **EVENS SANON and DÁNICA COTO**

Associated Press

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti

(AP) — Haitian Prime Minister Garry Conille ordered gangs to surrender their weapons during a televised speech late Wednesday in which he acknowledged how dangerous life in Haiti's capital and beyond has become and pledged to crack down on the rampant violence.

Conille spoke a day after a second group of 200 Kenyan police officers arrived in Haiti to help quell widespread gang violence as part of a U.N.-backed mission led by the East African country.

"Life every day in Port-au-Prince has turned into a battle for survival," he said. "Many innocent people have lost their lives."

Gangs control 80% of Port-au-Prince, and they have been blamed for killing or injuring more than 1,500 people in the first three months of the year alone.

Earlier Wednesday, Associated Press journalists observed a line of armored

vehicles roll down the main boulevard in downtown Port-au-Prince, one of the capital's more dangerous areas, as a crowd of Haitians gathered quietly to observe, arms on their hips. The vehicles carried Kenyan and Haitian police as

they fanned out across the downtown area. Several shots rang out, but it wasn't clear who fired and if anyone was injured or killed.

"Drop your weapons and recognize the authority of the state," Conille said in a message to gangs.

In late February, gangs launched coordinated attacks targeting key state infrastructure. They seized control of more than two dozen police stations; opened fire on the main international airport, forcing it to close for nearly three months; and stormed Haiti's two biggest prisons, releasing more than 4,000 inmates.

The violence led to the resignation of former Prime Minister Ariel Henry in late April and the installation of a transitional presidential council and Conille as the

new prime minister.

Diego Da Rin, with the International Crisis Group, noted that gang violence began diminishing in late May, with the first contingent of Kenyans arriving in late June.

He noted that so far, Kenyans appeared to have limited their patrols to neighborhoods in Port-au-Prince that have not been seized by gangs. "There really hasn't been any offensive operations," he said.


In upcoming months, the Kenyans will be joined by police and soldiers from the Bahamas, Bangladesh, Barbados, Benin, Chad and Jamaica for a total of 2,500 personnel.

Conille said restoring security is a top priority for him but warned it would take time. □



A Kenyan police officer part of a UN-backed multinational force gestures for journalists to move in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, Wednesday, July 17, 2024.


Associated Press



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PSA: Rock scribbling not acceptable!

In a series of photos published by the minister in charge of Nature, Ursell Arends, on his social media, Facebook, it is evident that individuals have written with what appears to be a marker pen on large rocks in nature, an act that the minister considers "unacceptable."

On his Facebook page, the official wrote a post: "The following images were

shared with us. Something absolutely unacceptable! We need to encourage tourists to respect our nature. Tour guides, whether on land or sea, taxi drivers, everyone who works directly with tourists, and if you see something like this being done as well. We can all lend a hand to preserve our nature. Stop stacking rocks and stop writing on them!"

Aruba Today also contact-

ed Minister Arends, where he assured that such acts are not tolerable when it comes to nature in Aruba. The photos were taken at Arashi, but it is not known if there are more rocks that have also been similarly marked with marker pens. "The idea is to bring more awareness in the community, with tour companies and with the tourists themselves, to neither support nor commit such acts. This is vandalism against nature," the official affirmed.

The call is to any citizen or tourist to consider that what might be considered a "custom" in certain countries can ultimately have a negative environmental impact and reflects a need to express oneself with meaningless content, besides affecting the landscape.



It is for this reason that we implore our beloved visitors to respect and honor

our beautiful nature by maintaining it clean and healthy. □



According to Etnia Nativa, in the 18th century most of the inhabitants of Aruba were indigenous who lived on the north coast, one of the largest communities lived in Alto Vista.

As they were very religious, they had a chief with the name of Antonio Silvester who guided them in the Christian life and it was he who decided to build a stone chapel with a roof of corn rods, which would serve as a place of prayer. In 1750 it was blessed by Father Algemesi who came from Coro-Venezuela and

appointed Domingo Antonio Silvester as the island's first prosecutor in the name of the Spanish crown and Rome. In 1752 the prosecution passed into the hands of Antonio Silvester's son-in-law, Miguel Álvarez, who continued to guide the parishioners in their prayers.

According to the book, The History of Alto Vista by R.H. Nooyen, it is not known when Domingo Antonio Silvester came to Aruba from Venezuela. The elders believe Antonio was a Spaniard. In 1780, father Joseph Antonio de la Vegal called

Alto Vista chapel and its link to Aruba's origins

Bernardino Silvester, one of Antonio's sons with his wife Anna Cathalina Tromp, "neighbors and naturals of the island Aruba" and thus they became natives.

At the end of the eighteen century many inhabitants the island died as a result of the black fever epidemic and since people believed that the Alto Vista area was the most infected, they began to build their homes further south within the Noord area, so the town of Noord began to grow into a community till getting its own Church. However religious festivals continued to be celebrated at this sacred native place, with the custom of arriving in procession to Alto Vista.

Two-hundred years after the beautiful time of Alto Vista, people can no longer

see much of the town of Alto Vista from 1750. With a lot of work they found the old foundations of the Church of the Queen of the Holiest Rosary to build a new chapel on the same place. The entire surrounding area was empty and desolated, making it hard to imagine that Alto Vista was a town at all. A hundred years later, people can see the remains of around twenty houses, some made of stone and others of clay. Nowadays, only around six of these houses remain.

South of the chapel in the yard two graves can be observed, there was the cemetery which father Pablo de Algemesi blessed. It is not certain, but it is believed that the two graves belong to Antonio Silvester and Miguel Alvares, ac-

cording to Nooyen. About 50 meters near the chapel there are still the markings of an old house, where Antonio and Bernardino Silvester would have lived. About 200 meters from the chapel there is a water tank which the locals call Tanki Cacique. In the past this tank was closed. But mostly water was brought out from the Poz di Noord, a well dug in the sand.

The chapel can be viewed from basically any point in the north side, even from Paradera and Sero Plat. All the historical remains around the chapel provide us with an idea on how the old people of Alto Vista used to live. Don't miss the opportunity to visit a place of historical significance with a window to Aruba's past. □

Craving a late-night snack? We got you covered!

(Oranjestad)—After a night out it's custom to grab yourself a late-night snack on the road. Here in Aruba, there are dozens of food trucks that you can visit to enjoy a late-night bite. Here are a few that can be found in the down town/hotel area.



Chalo burger

Chalo burger is a favorite among locals, and it's due to its popularity that it has branched out to different parts on the island. One of its main locations is in Palm Beach, near the hotel area.



Chalo offers a variety of fast-food meals, like hamburgers, hotdogs, loaded fries and more! A popular dish among locals is the Salchipapa: loaded fries with sausages, cheese and a mix of sweet and savory sauce. Perfect for those late-night cravings!

Chalo is open Wednesdays through Mondays from 7pm to 12 am (Fridays till 1am), and is located at Palm Beach 178 (a little past the roundabout near the Piazza Gianni's). Other Locations include Tanki Leendert and Savaneta.



Julio's Corner

Situated in a nice little corner off the highway, Julio's Corner has a huge menu comprised of different dishes and snacks, all made with a Venezuelan twist! From arepa's to chicken wings, to pizzas and burgers, Julio's Corner has it all to satisfy your taste! Editor's choice for what to get at Julio's Corner is the quesadilla, which comes with a side of fries.

Julio's Corner is open Mondays through Saturday from 6pm to 2am (Fridays and Saturdays up to 4am), and is located in the parking lot of the Eagle Bowling Palace, right on the other side of the road from the Sasaki gas station.



Habibi Express

Habibi Express is a Lebanese food truck stand, one of very few food trucks on the island to sell Mediterranean food. Located right at the entrance of The Local Market near the cruise ship port, here you can fill your stomach (and heart) with a variety of options like shawarmas, doners, kapsalons and more, all 100% halal. When asked, the chef there recommends all foodies to try their lamb shawarma, as it's a favorite among guests.

Habibi Express is open every day from 5pm to 12am. While you're there, how about a picture with the genie? ☐



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Aruba to me



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Planning on snorkeling? Get to know our Picuda!

(Oranjestad)—If you're ever planning on snorkeling during your vacation on Aruba, you may spot fish that you can't recognize. One of these may be the "Picuda", a very common fish that swims all year long in the waters of Aruba. Here's some information about the beloved Picuda.

Let's talk about the names of fish. Do you know your fish? This is an informative article that illustrate some fish and their names in Papiamentu, which the Department of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries, known as "Santa Rosa", wants to share and also obtain information from the public.

Picuda, Sphyrna barracuda, Greater Barracuda

Well known is the Picuda on the island—Barracuda in English. Its scientific name is Sphyrna barracuda. It is a widely caught fish. It is found throughout the year in our waters, where it is a so-called



"ambush predator" that stays still or floats in the water waiting for its prey to approach so it can attack it with lightning speed. It is well known for fishermen, especially for its white flesh in fish soup. In fishing culture, there are many other names, such as Pecho blanco, Blekito, Banana, or Bleki. The names

vary according to size.

Description

The Picuda is a long fish, with a round body like a torpedo and silver in color with shiny black stripes. Below, that is, the belly, is whiter, while the top part is darker. Its snout is very pointed, and the lower jaw

is longer than the upper one. Its peduncle, where the body meets the tail, is thick, while the tail also forms a crescent but in this case one more "full" than that of mullet or conefish. This reflects the hunting style of the Picuda. It needs to be able to accelerate quickly when the prey gets close.

In Aruba:

Picuda can be found in our waters around our island throughout the year. Picuda, in our waters, is edible without any problem. Picuda is also a highly sought-after fish by sports fishermen or recreational fishermen because it puts up a good fight once hooked. It can be caught via trolling from a boat, casting from shore with a line or rod, or by jigging, casting the lure (artificial bait) and moving it with certain rod motions. □

Picture courtesy of the Department of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries.

Aruba's most family-friendly beaches

(Oranjestad)—One of the biggest concerns that parents have when travelling with their children is a guarantee of their safety and healthy enjoyment. Therefore, we thought it would be a great help to traveling parents to list off some of the most family-friendly beaches around the island.

Baby Beach in San Nicolas

Baby Beach is one Aruba's most popular and visited beaches, and for good reason: This sandy and quiet lagoon is a great place for parents to sit back and relax while their children play in the shallow shores of the beach. Beside the relaxing

atmosphere, there are also several services that may accommodate your stay, like a parking lot, sun tent rentals, chairs, bathrooms and a snack bar right at the far left of the beach.

Mangel Halto in Pos Chiquito

Mangel Halto is situated in the back streets of the Pos Chiquito city. Though there are several stairs on the sides of the beach cliff leading you down, the best spot for families to hang out is across the bridge, passed the mangrove trees near the entrance sign. Here, there are small and big palapas, perfect for

big and small families to set up their belongings. In this area, the shore is also shallow, falling right around your knee before slowly getting deeper: perfect for kids to safely play.

Eagle Beach/Palm Beach in the hotel area

Yet another highly popular beach site, Eagle Beach and Palm Beach is where most of our visitors go to tan, swim or play in the white sand. Because they are near the low-rise and high-rise hotel areas, these beaches are the most accessible for visitors on foot. These beaches also offer many palapas free to use,

but you can also rent chairs and tents. Much like Baby Beach, these sites are one of the best beaches for your children to play and build sand castles.

Boca Catalina in Malmok

Boca Catalina is a small bay beach near the Malmok beach area further down the hotel areas. Though it may not be a very sandy beach, it is relatively quiet and tranquil. This is a great place for family to lay down a big blanket and have a little picnic. This is also one of the best places to snorkel, as this area is filled with little fish and corals, even close to the shore.

**Palm Island**

Ok, this one is technically not a beach, but a must-visit attraction for family fun. This small water park oasis is located further down the Mangel Halto Beach and is reachable by boat. This water park offers 6 hours of fun activities, food, drinks, and a chance to see pink flamingoes up close! □

Did you know about...

Basic driving rules on Aruba (part 2)

(Oranjestad)—In Yesterday's issue, we've provided some basic rules when driving on the four-lane highways and roundabouts on the island. Today, we want to offer you more tips and tricks when it comes to driving on the roads and highways of Aruba.

Speed limit in certain areas

As mentioned in yesterday's issue, the legal minimum and maximum speed limit on the island is 50 and 80 km/h respectively. However, there are some areas where it is mandated to drive up to a certain speed. This is always indicated by a circular traffic sign with red border and the number 50 on it. Signs like these are always paired

by a similar sign with the number crossed out further down the road. This means that the mandate for this speed is now over; you may increase your velocity. Red borders on traffic sign—whether it's a circle or triangle—usually signal a warning, prohibition or preference.

Besides the "50" sign, you may also

encounter a traffic sign that says "bebouwde kom". These can be found in San Nicolas and Oranjestad. Bebouwde kom signs are rectangular and blue, and essentially tell you that you are in a heavily inhabited area. The maximum speed limit in a bebouwde kom is 50 km/h. Just like the previous pair, bebouwde kom signs are also paired with a similar sign crossed out.

Priority signs

On the main roads of Aruba (not the highways), you may see a yellow, squared sign with a white border. This sign tells you that on this road, you have priority and all other traffic should yield to you. This sign can be seen in Savaneta for example. So, if you are driving on the main road in Savaneta going to San Nicolas, you are driving on a single long road, and other cars that want to get on this main road or cross it, either from an intersection or from a dirt road, must all wait until traffic on the main road is clear. In other words, you do not have to stop for them. This sign too has a counter part that indicates that your priority is over.

Another priority sign you may encounter is a triangle sign with a red border and something that looks like a cross. You'll see this sign in an intersection. The general rule of thumb for crossing an intersection that do not contain traffic lights, roundabouts, sign or arrows on the road, is to always yield for traffic on your right. However, if you encounter this sign on your side of the intersection, you have priority over the other cars, even the one on your right.

However, be careful not to confuse this sign with a similar up-side down triangle, also found on intersections. This sign is a prohibition sign, telling you that you have to stop and give other cars priority. Of course you also have a "stop" sign that mean the same thing. The stop sign is generally used for tricky intersections with minimal view of opposite incoming traffic.

These are some of the basic rules that you would have to know if you decide to drive on the island. These are of course other traffic signs, and we recommend you visit aruba-travelguide.com for an extensive overview of all traffic signs used on Aruba. □

Picture credits: aruba-travelguide.com



bebouwde kom



end bebouwde kom



end priority



end speed limit



intersection priority



priority



speed limit



stop sign



triangle stop sign

Don't forget to visit Aruba's famous Red Anchor

At the south east coast of the island, standing alone on a windswept and barren land stands a popular Aruba landmark – a large anchor. It overlooks the sea just beyond, watching over the shipping lanes. It stands there in memory and in honor of all seamen who have lost their life at sea.

Where to Find the Anchor?

The anchor is a “must see” landmark when you visit Aruba. It is among the most photographed historical landmarks for the island. You want to make sure you add this stop on your itinerary when your visiting the south coast of Aruba. The bright red anchor against the backdrop of the deep blue Caribbean sea and the azure blue skies, make a great backdrop for your vacation pictures.

The anchor is located at the entrance to Gate 6 to the former Lago Colony. It is on the outskirts of Seroe Colorado, on the south east point of the island at the “T” junction to Baby Beach.

Depending on where you are staying on the island, follow the signs that indicate the way to Baby Beach. Once you reach the T-junction, it will be right in front of you.

About the Anchor

Size

It will be hard to miss the anchor, it's huge! The anchor that weighs 21,772 kilos, is approximately 10 feet 6 inches wide and 15 feet, 6 inches tall.

On the anchor there are some numbers. The 4112 and 4115, which are believed to be the serial numbers that refer to the “fluke” or horizontal and vertical parts of the anchor, respectively. The number 21772K refers to the weight of the anchor in kilos.

This type of anchor was manufactured by Hoesch Dortmund Horde, at a foundry located in Germany.

Where did the Anchor Come From?

There are a number of stories as to the origins of the anchor, which one do you think it was? (Unfortunately the mystery has never been solved, so your imagination can pick which one you think it might be!)

Story 1:

“According to Mr. Manuel M. Curiel, an ex-Lago Tug Captain, a fully laden VLCC (Very Large Crude Carrier) was seeking a mooring at the 15-mile anchorage, known as Bara, on the southern part of



The Red Anchor situated at the entrance of former Lago Colony in San Nicolas

the island. This is the usual shallow mooring location for ships awaiting orders, etc. The weather was rough with strong current. The normal procedure is that they would walk out three shackles (about 90 feet) until the anchor touches the bottom while the chain must rest on the bottom. Subsequently, they will walk out some extra shackles and when the ship starts to swing or lean on one side, the anchor is properly set. Because of the rough weather, unfortunately they did not get the time to walk out the extra tackles and because of the tension exerted on the winch, it broke, and they lost the anchor and its chain.”

Story 2:

“Mr. Curiel also said that at one time a small tanker with a Korean crew, while lifting their anchor also lifted another anchor near the inner harbor. When the ship asked for assistance, he went with his tugboat along with a barge, to help. But eventually they had to cut the chain and let the anchor go to the bottom because they could not untangle them.”

How Did The Anchor Become a Landmark?

Sometime between 1980 and 1985, three gentlemen (Mr. Wim Martinus – the Harbormaster of Aruba;

Mr. August Genser – the ex-Division Superintendent of Lago's Laboratory; and Mr. Willie Davis – Owner of Filtec at Zeewijk in San Nicolas), were having a conversation with Mr. Charlie Brouns Jr. at his famous Charlie's Bar and Restaurant in San Nicolas. Charlie, who was a visionary and had dreams for developing the San Nicolas area, told these gentlemen that he would like to come up with something innovative for the San Nicolas area to draw tourism to the area.

The “anchor”, which at that time was being stored at the Oranjestad harbor, was suggested as an option. Charlie liked the idea! He then contacted the President of Lago for permission to acquire the anchor. He was granted permission and the anchor was then relocated to its present location and dedicated “To All Seamen” on the occasion of the closing of the Lago Oil Refinery on March 31, 1985.

Through the Years

Through the years the Anchor was slowly weathering from the wind and salt. As time passed, sadly the origin and purpose of the anchor slowly faded away from people's memories.

After Charles Brouns Jr died on September 15, 2004, his friend Mr. Sam

Speziale, requested assistance from the management of Valero Aruba Refinery to help maintain the monument. The Valero Aruba Refinery, graciously sandblasted and painted the anchor and poured a concrete pad around it. On April 17, 2005, the anchor monument was rededicated “To All Seamen” in a formal ceremony in memory of Charles Brouns Jr.

Today, the anchor stands both as memorial to all seaman who have lost their lives at sea, but also as a silent reminder that Seroe Colorado is part of San Nicolas and that San Nicolas is still a vibrant and important part of the island of Aruba.

The Best Time to Visit

When your planning your visit to the south end of the island, you will want to include in your itinerary the many things to see and do there. The anchor will be just one of these stops, (keep an eye out for our future editions, we publish our recommendations!).

With that being said, I have to say, if you enjoy catching a sunrise, the anchor is one of the best places on the island to catch the sunrise. But in reality, anytime is a good time to visit, depending on your personal schedule. □

CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS 43 "Rolling in

1 Not flimsy the Deep"

6 Molten singer

rock 44 Frighten

11 Battery 45 Trouble

end 46 Undue

12 Mexican rush

farewell

13 Gothic

architec-

ture

feature

14 Pool hall

stuff

15 Pollux's

mother

17 Cuts off

18 God with

a hammer

20 Cruise

stop

22 Drill target

23 Hates

26 Carl's wife

in "Up"

28 Perfect

29 Guile

31 Status —

32 One of

a bear

family

33 Fetching

34 Salon

sound

36 Half a

sextet

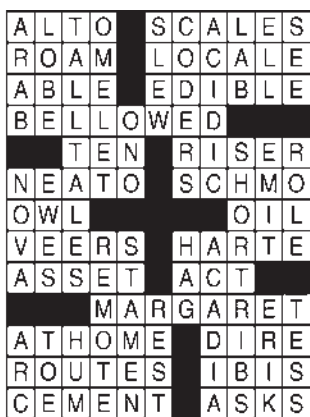
38 North

African

capital

40 Verdi

pieces



DOWN

1 Slump

2 "Not —

dare!"

3 Tall trees

4 Lazy sort

5 Title paper

6 Buddy

7 Stuck

8 Tall trees

9 Blue

cheese

feature

10 Sets the

price at

Yesterday's answer

16 Clumsy

one

18 Foot

features

19 Rise

34 Rough

21 Elevator

pioneer

35 Au

23 Like an

abyss

37 Foolhardy

24 Lacking

slack

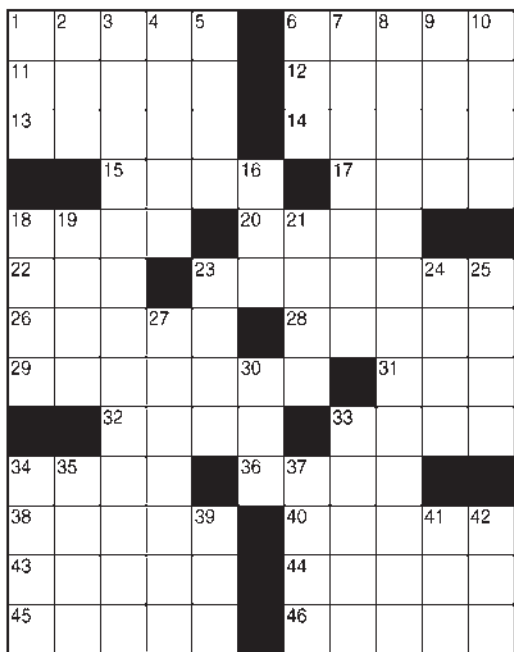
to go

25 Tart fruit

41 Trickery

27 Heaped up

42 Spot



4-26

AXYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

4-26

CRYPTOQUOTE

DXN OPM GJI JXBJICG UVPTK

CP GJDG XO APT NXCC XG.

APT QXVV JXG D VPOGA

N P T E G D X E . — N D P M X

W M P R I M Z

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: DEMOCRACY IS THE RECURRENT SUSPICION THAT MORE THAN HALF OF THE PEOPLE ARE RIGHT MORE THAN HALF THE TIME. — E.B. WHITE

Cruise ship Schedule: July 01 - July 30 2024

			ARR	DEPT	BERTH	
THU	04	CELEBRITY BEYOND	08.00	21.00	C	1
TUE	09	ADVENTURE OF THE SEAS	08.00	20.00	B	1
		CARNIVAL HORIZON	09.00	22.00	C	1
WED	10	RHAPSODY OF THE SEAS	09.00	21.00	C	1
TUE	16	CARNIVAL CELEBRATION	08.00	22.00	C	1
		CARNIVAL VISTA	13.00	23.00	I	1
WED	17	CELEBRITY BEYOND	08.00	21.00	C	1
TUE	23	CARNIVAL HORIZON	09.00	22.00	C	1
TUE	30	CELEBRITY BEYOND	08.00	21.00	C	1

Helpful tips for your stay on Aruba

Supermarket hours



Supermarket hours may vary depending on where you are staying on the island. Generally though, most supermarkets are open from 8am to 9 or 10pm, Monday through Saturday. On Sundays, supermarkets generally close earlier; mostly around 2pm.

(Oranjestad)—When traveling to another country, especially for the first time, it is always better to be over-prepared than under-prepared. That is why we have a list of basic but important information that we think may come in handy to Aruba's visitors.

Electrical power



Aruba generally operates on 110V to 127V supply voltage and 60Hz. There are also three types of out-

Drinking water



The water that flows through the sinks of every house, hotels and other establishments is distilled and perfectly safe to drink. Aruba's drinking water exceeds WHO's international standards for water quality, so there is no need to buy bottled water from the store.

Safety



Since February 2024, Aruba has been categorized as the safest country in the Caribbean by The Telegraph, and many tourist that visit have often told us how they feel safe to explore the island or walk around at night. However, rare incidents do occur, so keep yourself and your belongings safe.

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24/7

Historic utility AND high fashion. 80-year-old LL Bean staple finds a new audience as a trendy bag



Gracie Wiener poses with some of her tote bags in Washington Square Park in New York, Wednesday, July 17, 2024,

Associated Press

By **DAVID SHARP**
Associated Press

FREEPORT, Maine (AP) — L.L. Bean created it 80 years ago to haul heavy blocks of ice. Now it's a must-have summer fashion accessory. The simple, sturdy canvas bag called the Boat and Tote is having an extended moment 80 years after its introduction, thanks to a social media trend in which they're monogrammed with ironic or flashy phrases. New Yorker Gracie Wiener helped get it started

by ordering her humble bags from L.L. Bean monogrammed with "Psycho" and then "Prada," the pricey Italian luxury brand, instead of just her name or initials, and posting about them on Instagram. Then others began showcasing their own unique bags on TikTok. Soon, it wasn't enough to have a bag monogrammed with "Schlepper," "HOT MESS," "slayyyy" or "cool mom." Customers began testing the limits of the human censors in L.L. Bean's monogram

department, which bans profanity "or other objectionable words or phrases," with more provocative wording like "Bite me," "Dum Blonde" and "Ambit-chous." Social media fueled the surge, just as it did for Stanley's tumblers and Trader Joe's \$2.99 canvas bags, which were once sell-

ing on eBay for \$200, said Beth Goldstein, an analyst at Circana, which tracks consumer spending and trends.

The tote's revival came at a time when price-conscious consumers were forgoing expensive handbags, sales of which have weakened, and L.L. Bean's bag fit the bill as a functional item that's trendy precisely because it's not trendy, she said. L.L. Bean's regular bags top out at about \$55, though some fancier versions cost upward of \$100. □

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Editors

Pilar Flores
Richard Brooks
Angenette Figuereo

Sales

Mark Gomes
Sulaika Croes

Classifieds

classified@cspnv.com

Distribution and Collection

accounting@bondia.com

Social / Website

Juan Luis Pinto

Weststraat 22
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WEEK 28
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(one bedroom)
Price range: \$3,600.00 - \$4,500.00

Presidential suites
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Price range: \$9,000.00 - \$18,000.00

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How NASA and SpaceX will bring down the space station when it's retired

By **MARCIA DUNN**
AP Aerospace Writer
CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP)

— SpaceX will use a powerful, souped-up capsule to shove the International Space Station out of orbit once time is up for the sprawling lab. NASA and Elon Musk's company on Wednesday outlined the plan to burn the space station up on reentry and plunge what's left into the ocean, ideally at the beginning of 2031 when it hits the 32-year mark. The space agency rejected other options, like taking the station apart and bringing everything home or handing the keys to someone else.

NASA gave SpaceX a \$843 million contract to bring down the station the biggest structure ever built off the planet.

Here's a rundown on the work and challenges ahead: Why get rid of the space station?

The space station is already showing signs of age. Russia and the U.S. launched the first pieces in late 1998, and astronauts moved in two years later. Europe and Japan added their own segments, and Canada provided robotic arms. By the time NASA's shuttles retired in 2011, the station had grown to the size of a football field, with a mass of nearly 1 million pounds (430,000 kilograms). NASA figures the station will last until at least 2030. The goal is for private companies to launch their own space stations by



This photo provided by NASA, taken from the SpaceX Crew Dragon Endeavour, shows the International Space Station, Nov. 8, 2021, flying more than 250 miles above the Nile Delta in Egypt. Associated Press

then, with NASA serving as one of many customers. That strategy already in place for station cargo and crew deliveries will free NASA up to focus on moon and Mars travel. NASA could decide to extend the station's life, too, if no commercial outposts are up there yet. The aim is to have an overlap so scientific research is not interrupted. Why not bring it back to Earth?

NASA considered dismantling the space station and hauling the pieces back to Earth, or letting private companies salvage the parts for their own planned outposts. But the station was never intended to be taken apart in orbit, according to NASA,

and any such effort would be expensive and also risky to the astronauts who would handle the disassembly. Besides, there's no spacecraft as big as NASA's old shuttles to bring everything down. Another option would be to boost the empty station to a higher, more stable orbit. But that, too, was dismissed given the logistical issues and the increased risk of space junk. How will it be brought down? Visiting spacecraft periodically boost the space station so it remains in an orbit approximately 260 miles (420 kilometers) high. Otherwise, it would keep getting lower and lower until it plunged, uncontrolled, from orbit. NASA wants to ensure a safe

reentry over a remote section of the South Pacific or possibly the Indian Ocean, so that means launching a spacecraft that will dock to the station and steer it toward a watery grave. NASA expects some denser pieces to survive, ranging in size from a microwave oven to a sedan, in a narrow debris field 1,200 miles (2,000 kilometers) long. NASA and its partners considered using three Russian supply ships for the job, but a more robust craft was needed. The call went out to industry and, in June, SpaceX won the contract for a de-orbit vehicle. What will the deorbit spacecraft look like? SpaceX plans to use an ordinary Dragon capsule the

kind that carries supplies and astronauts to the space station but with a much bigger trunk housing a record 46 engines and more than 35,000 pounds (16,000 kilograms) of fuel. SpaceX's Sarah Walker said the challenge will be creating a spacecraft powerful enough to guide the space station while resisting the tugs and forces from increased atmospheric drag during final descent.

This spacecraft will require an especially powerful rocket just to get to orbit, according to NASA. The capsule would be launched 1 1/2 years before the station's planned demise. Astronauts still would be aboard as it's gradually lowered. Six months before the station's destruction, the crew would abandon ship and return home. Once the station is down to about 137 miles (220 kilometers), the Dragon would bring it down four days later. Has this been done before? NASA's first space station, Skylab, came crashing down in 1979, with debris raining down onto Australia and the surrounding Pacific. The space agency had hoped one of the first space shuttle crews could attach a rocket to control Skylab's descent or boost its orbit. But the shuttle wasn't ready by then, with its first flight not until 1981. Ground controllers managed to send Skylab into a slow tumble, aiming for the Indian Ocean. But some pieces also landed in Western Australia. □

Boeing is closer to understanding thruster failures on its first astronaut flight with latest test



In this photo provided by NASA, Boeing Crew Flight Test astronauts Suni Williams and Butch Wilmore, center, pose with Expedition 71 Flight Engineers Mike Barratt, left, and Tracy Dyson, aboard the International Space Station's Quest airlock on June 24, 2024.

Associated Press

By **MARCIA DUNN**
AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — Boeing is closer to understanding what went wrong with its astronaut capsule in orbit, now that testing is complete on a spare thruster here on Earth.

The Starliner capsule has been docked at the International Space Station since June 6. It should have returned with its NASA test pilots by mid-June, but thruster failures and helium leaks prompted NASA and Boeing to extend its stay.

Officials said Thursday there's still no return date for astronauts Butch Wilmore and Suni Williams. Engineers will first disassemble the thruster that was test-fired in New Mexico over the past couple of weeks. Then they'll analyze the data before clearing Starliner for the trip home.

"We collected an incredible amount of data on the thruster that could help us better understand what is going on in flight," NASA's commercial crew program manager Steve Stich said in a statement.

The testing managed to replicate the thruster conditions up until the capsule's docking at the space station, as well as what the thrusters will experience between undocking and descent, according to NASA.

This is the Starliner's first test flight with a crew aboard. □

Dan Brown makes late birdies for a 1-shot lead over Shane Lowry in wind-challenged British Open

By DOUG FERGUSON

AP Golf Writer

TROON, Scotland (AP) —

Daniel Brown had a major championship debut he won't soon forget. He birdied two of the last three holes Thursday in the British Open, giving him a 6-under 65 with just enough spectators still left in the twilight of Royal Troon to celebrate with him.

It gave him a one-shot lead over Shane Lowry, who played bogey-free for a 66 and his best start in 46 majors.

Lowry at least knew what to expect with an opposite wind that seemed to catch just about everyone off guard. He came to Troon two weeks ago and knew what to expect, and it paid off handsomely for the Irishman. The surprise was Brown.

A one-time winner on the European tour, he arrived at Royal Troon having failed to make the cut in seven straight tournaments dating to March until a couple of good events. One was the final qualifying to earn a spot in his first major, the other at the Scottish Open when he made the cut and



Shane Lowry of Ireland catches the ball as he prepares to putt on the 18th green during his opening round of the British Open Golf Championships at Royal Troon golf club in Troon, Scotland, Thursday, July 18, 2024.

Associated Press

finished 61st.

But this day was all about the wind yes, it was fierce, but it was different. Instead of players trying to make a score on the downwind front nine and keeping it together on the way back, it was tough from

start-to-finish. Rory McIlroy certainly found that to be the case. He shot 78 with a pair of double bogeys. Ditto for U.S. Open champion Bryson DeChambeau, who went out in 42 on his way to a 76. Every major is tough on 48-year-old

Tiger Woods, who had a 78 for his highest start in a major since an 80 in the 2015 U.S. Open at Chambers Bay. Lowry motored along, putting as well as he has all year, soaking up the warm applause all while reminding himself

it was only one day. But he sure knew what to expect.

"Fortunately enough, I came here two weeks ago and I played this wind on the second day that I played here. I saw the golf course in every wind possible I could see it," Lowry said. "Yeah, I guess that was a good thing to do, and it's out there paying off a little bit today." Justin Thomas is off to another great start for the second straight week in Scotland, even if his score doesn't look that way.

He had a 68 — he shot 62 last week in the Scottish Open — and feels as though he played better because the misses are more severely punished at Troon.

The group at 68 included PGA champion Xander Schauffele and Justin Rose, who also played bogey-free with greater appreciation of this Open because he had to endure 36-hole final qualifying just to get in.

Throw in the occasional rain, and Masters champion Scottie Scheffler found it plenty difficult after battling his way to a 70. □

Campenaerts wins a 3-man sprint to take Tour de France stage as Pogacar keeps yellow jersey

BARCELONETTE, France

(AP) — Belgian rider Victor Campenaerts posted the biggest win of his career Thursday as he claimed the tough and hilly 18th stage of the Tour de France after a three-man sprint.

Two-time Tour champion Tadej Pogacar kept the race leader's yellow jersey as the top of the overall standings remained unchanged with just three days of racing left.

Campenaerts spent most of the day at the front and jumped away from a breakaway group some 35 kilometers (22 miles) from the finish together with Frenchman Matteo Vercher and former world champion Michal Kwiatkowski of Poland.

Campenaerts, who won a Giro stage in 2021, patiently waited behind his rivals in the last kilometer and did not panic when Vercher

attacked. He stayed in the wheel of Kwiatkowski, then launched his sprint from behind.

The Lotto Dstny rider celebrated his win with his partner and baby on a video call straight after the finish. "After the (spring) classics, I had a very difficult time," Campenaerts said, holding back tears. "I had a verbal agreement with the team about extending the contract and I got ignored for a long time and it was really difficult. I was on a long altitude camp but my girlfriend was there and she supported me every day, highly pregnant, and I was struggling to finish my training schedules. But I changed my mind, I have a bright future now still in cycling, I became a father and it was like blue skies, only blue sky."

There was a flurry of attacks at the start of the

rollercoaster 180-kilometer stage featuring five climbs as riders tried to break away before the first ascent, the Col du Festre. But the peloton rode at a high speed, thwarting all those early efforts.

About 20 riders finally managed to open a gap during that climb and were joined by Wednesday's stage winner Richard Carapaz and other talented contenders for the stage win, including Ben Healy and Geraint Thomas.

With the best-placed rider in that large group already lagging nearly 34 minutes behind Pogacar overall, the pack let the break get away. The main contenders for the overall win, including Pogacar and his rivals Jonas Vingegaard and Remco Evenepoel, finished 13 minutes and 40 seconds behind Campenaerts.

Earlier, Healy attacked twice from the leading group in the Cote de Saint-Apollinaire but his move eventually backfired as the Irishman got dropped when others upped the pace.

A pivotal moment came in the Cote des Demoiselles when Kwiatkowski accelerated to move away and was later joined by Campenaerts and Vercher. □



Belgium's Victor Campenaerts celebrates as he crosses the finish line ahead of France's Matteo Vercher, hidden behind Campenaerts, and Poland's Michal Kwiatkowski, left, to win during the eighteenth stage of the Tour de France cycling race over 179.5 kilometers (111.5 miles) with start in Gap and finish in Barcelonnette, France, Thursday, July 18, 2024.

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New York Mets 1B Pete Alonso among MLB stars who could use big second half heading into free agency

By **DAVID BRANDT**
AP Baseball Writer

PHOENIX (AP) — Pete Alonso's disappointing performance in this year's Home Run Derby wasn't a particularly big deal for the future of his big-league career.

His play over the next three months could be a different story.

The 29-year-old is one of the most coveted free agents in Major League Baseball for the upcoming offseason and could make himself a lot of money or potentially lose a lot of it depending on how he plays in the second half of the season.

Alonso played in his fourth All-Star game on Tuesday night, making the National League team despite a relatively lackluster first half. He's hitting .240 with 19 homers and 51 RBIs and a career-low .772 OPS. Those numbers might be pretty



New York Yankees' Juan Soto releases his bat during his at-bat in the third inning of a baseball game against the Baltimore Orioles, Sunday, July 14, 2024, in Baltimore.

Associated Press

good for most players, but for a man who wants to hit the market as one of the game's elite players, it's not up to his standards.

Alonso said he's not worried about his personal situ-

ation. He just wants to play well so his New York Mets make the playoffs which would happen if the season ended today.

"I don't dwell on it at all because I'm just focused

on winning games and I'm just really focused on doing what I can every single day to help the team in a positive way," Alonso said. "I'm honestly just focusing on performing and doing the

best I can to help my team win. I'm just focused on the season at hand."

Here are a few other potential free agents who are looking to raise their stock in the second half:

1B Paul Goldschmidt, Cardinals: Does the 36-year-old slugger have anything left in the tank for another contract? He was the National League MVP in 2022, but has regressed in a hurry since that point. The first baseman is hitting just .230 with 13 homers, 37 RBIs and a career-low .664 OPS.

3B Alex Bregman, Astros: The 30-year-old has bounced back somewhat from a very slow start, posting a .256 average, 12 homers and .730 OPS through 92 games. But those numbers are still below his career averages. A big second half would help ease fears that he's on the downhill side of his career. □